

Remarks by Karen Walker, Director, Program Accountability Division,
Food Stamp Program, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
*SNAP-Successful Strategies for Collaboration:
Implications of Lessons Learned*
FNS National Nutrition Education Conference II
Arlington, VA - September 13, 2005

- I would like to thank all of our speakers from California that have taken time today to share their approach to increasing collaboration among FNS programs. Your enthusiasm and hard work in making SNAP a success in California is an inspiration to us all.
- While California has selected a SNAP goal of “Formulating Partnerships to Promote Fruit and Vegetable Consumption,” the collaboration strategies presented here today are applicable to States with other SNAP goals as well.
- I believe that by strengthening the linkages across FNS programs we can maximize our nutrition education resources and increase the reach and impact of our messages. Whether the message is focused on fruit and vegetable consumption or breastfeeding promotion, collaboration is vital to our success.
- I'd like to leave you with five ideas about applying the collaboration strategies you've heard here today back in your States.
- **First, all FNS programs are working under a shared vision of “improved nutrition of children and low-income people.”** The work you are doing to put SNAP into action supports the achievement of this vision. Let this vision be a navigational beacon that keeps your activities, campaigns, and efforts focused and on target.
- **Second, the path to collaboration may not always be easy, but the outcome makes the journey worthwhile.** The California SNAP team encountered many barriers to collaboration, which they overcame by continuing to work together and developing innovative strategies. You've heard today how California has forged new relationships among FNS programs, through regular meetings on neutral territory. Work with your SNAP team to create a meeting environment and schedule that nurtures teamwork and collaboration.
- **Third, collaboration does not necessitate working outside the regulatory boundaries of your program.** It means synchronizing and coordinating the nutrition education provided through your program so that it reinforces and builds upon the nutrition education provided in other FNS

programs. In the Food Stamp Program, State agencies incorporate relevant SNAP activities into their Nutrition Education Plans and Outreach Plans to inform and obtain FNS approval. Creating a good referral system is one of the ways States can help increase linkages among FNS programs. Today, you heard how California used summits to help train WIC staff on the benefits and eligibility requirements of the FSP in order to help increase cross-program referrals.

- **Fourth, make cross-program collaboration a priority.** You heard today about the benefits of involving decision makers and high-level supervisors in the process. MOUs, like the California 5 A Day MOU, can reaffirm each agency's role in the collaboration and emphasize overall commitment to the process. California also designated a person that facilitated the SNAP effort, who could make sure that the group stayed on task and met regularly. You may not be able to do this in the same way California has, but consider how you and your colleagues can make it happen.
- **Finally, collaborations with community partners can leverage resources and tackle activities that are outside the authority of control of FNS programs.** FNS recognizes that our nutrition assistance programs cannot prevent overweight and obesity alone. Regulations and funding necessitate that we focus our resources in certain areas and on the neediest people. This is where community partners can play a role in enhancing and reinforcing nutrition education messages where low-income people live, learn, work and play.
- I thank all of you for coming today and wish you much success in your collaborations across programs during the upcoming year.